



Review

Origin and history of the Regius Chair of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police established in the University of Edinburgh in 1807

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1. Background to the establishment of the Regius Chair of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police in the University of Edinburgh in 1807

January 2007 represents the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Regius Chair of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police in the University of Edinburgh, and this was the first Chair of this discipline in Britain. Shortly afterwards, in 1839, a second Chair in this discipline was established. This was in the University of Glasgow.¹ The history of the Edinburgh Chair is particularly curious, and justifies further consideration here.

The first individual to provide lectures on this topic in Britain was Andrew Duncan *senior* (1744–1828) Fig. 1.² In 1789, shortly after he had been appointed to the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine (or Physiology), Duncan delivered his first lectures on legal medicine and public health. It has been suggested that this was because he was particularly disturbed by the unsatisfactory and contradictory “expert” testimonies that had been given before the Donellan murder trial, held at the Assizes in Warwick.³ By 1791, he delivered a series of weekly lectures for his medical class on this discipline, and this was associated with the publication of his *Heads of Lectures on Medical Jurisprudence*.⁴ From 1801, he also delivered a series of extra-academical lectures on medical jurisprudence during the winter months, and a summer series of lectures on Saturday mornings on medical police.

He was particularly widely travelled on the Continent, and was familiar with many of the subjects taught in European Medical Schools at that time. One of these subjects was “medical jurisprudence and medical police”. This had been taught on the Continent for a number of years, although how the term “medical police” was interpreted

in Europe at that time was somewhat different from the modern interpretation of this term, in that it is now interpreted as the science of “public health”. The principal function of “medical police”, as it was originally termed, was to regulate the general health of the community.

While on his various travels in Europe, Andrew Duncan *senior* had met and was particularly impressed with the activities of Johann Peter Frank (1745–1821) Fig. 2. From the latter’s student days he had developed ideas in relation to the responsibility of the state for overseeing and maintaining the health of its citizens. Over a period of years, he drafted in his native language of German his monumental treatise entitled *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizey*.⁵ Duncan *senior* was so impressed with the ideas it contained that, from 1795, he gave one lecture each week on this topic, and this formed a critical component of his own teaching course.

It has been suggested that his son, Andrew Duncan *junior*, also believed in the importance of this topic, and in 1798 convinced his father to write a memorial to the Town Council, at that time the patrons of the University of Edinburgh.⁶ In the latter he urged them to institute a Chair of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police (i.e. Forensic Medicine and Public Health). This was to be similar to the Chairs in this discipline that had recently been introduced in France. In their view, the principal effect of this would be to formalise the teaching of this discipline. Duncan’s memorial was entitled “*A Short View of the Extent and Importance of Medical Jurisprudence, Considered as a Branch of Education*”.⁷ In this, he stressed that in his view this would have two principal benefits. These would be in relation to establishing a formal course of lectures in forensic medicine, as this would greatly assist in the detection of criminal activity. More importantly, he believed that the teaching of this second component would emphasise the role of the state in introducing means of improving public health. By this means, he believed that

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Fig. 1. Painting of Andrew Duncan *senior* now in the possession of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, and displayed in their Hall. In the background, on the right, is a framed portrait of the Edinburgh Public Dispensary. *With permission, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.*



Fig. 2. Portrait engraving of Johann Peter Frank. This formed the frontispiece to the first edition of his *System einer vollständigen medizinischen Polizey* of 1784.

the latter would increase the prosperity and security of the nation. Unfortunately, when Duncan first made this proposal to the Town Council, the Senatus of the University of Edinburgh, but particularly the conservative Members of the Medical Faculty, condemned the suggestion. This was on the grounds that “*the multiplying of Professorships, especially on new subjects of education, does not promise to advance the prosperity or dignity of the University*”.⁸ They also indicated that the existing professors within the University of Edinburgh could cover the teaching of “*medical jurisprudence*” within their own courses.⁶

Despite these reservations from the Members of the University’s Senatus, Duncan *senior* approached Henry Erskine (1746–1817), a prominent Whig lawyer. During the brief Whig administration of 1806–07, when Erskine was appointed Lord Advocate for Scotland, he approached the King’s Ministers with Duncan’s memorial, associated with a covering petition of his own. In the latter, he stressed the usefulness of medical jurisprudence to the law in criminal and property-related cases. As a result of Erskine’s intervention, a Regius Chair of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police was established by the Crown in Edinburgh in 1807, and his eldest son Andrew Duncan

junior was appointed to this post. It should be noted that at that time, the Lord Advocate conducted most of the Scottish business at Westminster, and clearly also saw the advantages of establishing such a Chair in Edinburgh.

The conditions of appointment of Andrew Duncan *junior* (1773–1832) Fig. 3⁹ by the Crown to the Regius Chair of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police were detailed in the Council’s *Minutes* of 22 April 1807.¹⁰ These ran as follows:

George the third ... whereas we considering that the improvement of those branches of Science taught in every University of reputation on the Continent of Europe under the titles of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police is an object of great importance and that the instituting a Professorship for that purpose in our University of Edinburgh, under certain conditions and limitations will be of great utility, therefore we being desirous of giving all suitable encouragement to the same have agreed to erect and endow a Professorship in our foresaid University of Edinburgh, under the name of “The Professorship of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police” and being well informed of the ability and good Endowments of Andrew Duncan Junior Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh for the discharge of the duties of the aforesaid office; ... appointed during the days of his life ...

Conditions – his lectures “shall not on any pretence whatever interfere with any of the courses of lectures now delivered in the said University ... in serving to promote the administration of Justice, and to assist the legislature and Magistracy in regulating all matters connected with the preservation and improvement of Public Health;” ... granting unto him ... all rights and privileges [sic] which belong to any other Professor in the said University ... and appoint the foresaid Andrew Duncan Junior to have an establishment salary of one hundred pounds sterling yearly ... his salary to commence upon the fifth day of this instant January. Given at our Court at Saint James’s the twenty first day of January 1807 in the forty seventh year of our reign.

The Tories were returned to power later in 1807, only months after the establishment of this Chair in Edinburgh, and indicated their concern and distress at the establishment of this post in a long debate in the House of Com-



Fig. 3. Portrait engraving of Andrew Duncan *junior*.

mons held shortly after their return to power. However, despite this, they made no attempt to reverse this appointment. A similar reluctance by central government to establish such a Chair in Glasgow also occurred, and a staunch Whig supporter was appointed to this post when it was eventually established in 1839. This post had originally been proposed a decade earlier by the Royal Commissioners to the Scottish Universities of 1826,¹¹ and the appointment was again made, without consultation with the University's Tory Principal, and despite strong opposition in that University, during another brief Whig administration. However, on the untimely death of Robert Cowan (1796–1841), the first appointee to this post, he was succeeded by the staunch Tory supporter Harry Rainy (1792–1876), an appointment supported by the Tory administration in power at that time.

Because of the Edinburgh University Senatus's reservations, for the first 18 years of its existence, this Chair in Edinburgh was initially established in the Faculty of Law, and was only then translated into the Faculty of Medicine when Christison held this appointment. Furthermore, it was not until 1825 that Medical Jurisprudence was admitted even as an *optional* alternative into the medical curriculum, and not until 1833 that it was made a compulsory component of the Edinburgh medical curriculum. It was for this reason that Christison, effectively the second Professor in this discipline, did not attend this class when he was a medical student in Edinburgh.¹²

Duncan *senior* had encouraged his son, Andrew Duncan *junior*, to travel extensively on the Continent. This would give him the opportunity of not only learning their languages, but of paying social calls on many of the learned men who lived and practised medicine there, and seeing the hospitals of those cities.¹³ For this purpose, his father gave him numerous letters of introduction. For example, during 1795, when he was in Germany, he remained in Brunswick for some months in order to familiarise himself with the language. In late June or early in July, he moved to Göttingen, with letters of introduction to many of the city's intelligencia. In September of that year, he revised his thoughts about journeying to Italy where he had originally proposed spending the winter months. He decided that it would be better if he remained in Göttingen where he proposed attending classes at the University. He believed that this would principally be to improve his knowledge of German, and would also enable him to prepare a revised and annotated translation of Frank's *Complete System of Medical Police* (see above) on which a number of his father's lectures had been based. From Göttingen, he visited Vienna and then proceeded to Italy. He then returned to Vienna, where he attended the clinical lectures of Johann Peter Frank, then at the head of his profession.

On his return to Edinburgh, he assisted his father in editing his *Medical Commentaries*. Its successor, the *Annals of Medicine*, was initially edited by both father and son, and later exclusively by Andrew Duncan *junior*. He was

then requested by Lord Selkirk to attend his son, who then lived on the Continent, and was in ill health. On Duncan *junior*'s arrival there, he found that the young nobleman had by then died. He then remained on the Continent, visiting a number of countries there, and also visited cities in which he had not passed through on his previous visits to the Continent. On his subsequent return to Edinburgh, he settled down as a medical practitioner. Shortly afterwards, he was elected FRCP Edin, and one of the Physicians to the Public Dispensary that had been established by his father in 1773. In addition to assisting his father in his clinical practice, he was also, from 1796, in charge of the Fever Hospital at Queensberry House.¹⁴ This was his only formal clinical appointment at that time.

In 1805, he became the senior editor of the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*. During the early part of 1807, he was appointed to the Regius Chair of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police, being generally considered to be the most suitably qualified individual then available to fill this post. He commenced lecturing during the following session. His lectures were well received both by his pupils and by medical practitioners generally, and greatly stimulated interest in this discipline in Britain. He was appointed Secretary (from 1809 to 22) and Librarian to the University. Because the building in which the Library was housed was unfinished, between 1816 and 32 he was one of the College Commissioners appointed to superintend the completion of the various university buildings. One of his numerous contributions to medicine was his experiments on Peruvian bark, and the discovery of cinchonin. This paved the way for the discovery of the vegetable alkaloids.¹⁵

Because of his tireless activities in the Royal Infirmary during the winter of 1817–18 and during the summer of 1818, he was appointed joint Professor with his father in the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine (or Physiology). In 1821, he was elected unopposed to the Chair of Materia Medica and Pharmacy. Despite repeated episodes of ill health, probably contracted during his hospital duties, he continued to lecture. However, in 1832, he retired to his bed, and died on the 13th May, at the age of 58.

William Pulteney Alison (1790–1859) Fig. 4¹⁶ succeeded Andrew Duncan *junior* as Regius Professor, although he only held this office between 1820 and 21. He had graduated with the MD in 1811, and after a brief period

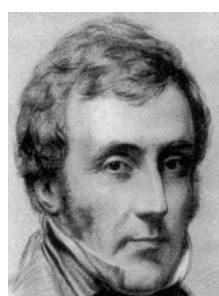


Fig. 4. William Pulteney Alison. Drawing by George Richmond, 1847.

travelling on the Continent he settled in medical practice in Edinburgh, initially as a Physician to the New Town Dispensary. It was in this role that he was exposed to the often-destitute conditions in which the poor lived, particularly during the epidemics of 1817–19, of 1827–28 and during 1832, 1837 and 1838. It was during these periods that he became convinced that there was a direct relationship between the conditions in which the poor lived and their risk of exposure to infectious disease. This eventually led him to publish his *Observations on the Management of the Poor in Scotland*,¹⁷ and this in turn led to the successful introduction of the Poor Law Act of 1845.¹⁸ This was also associated with the appointment of a Board of Supervision. Without question these changes were only introduced due to his extreme compassion for the needs of the poor.

Alison only held the Regius Chair of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police for about a year, between 1820 and 21. He subsequently succeeded Andrew Duncan junior in the Chair of the Institutes of Medicine (or Physiology), and he held the latter post for the following 21 years. Not surprisingly, when Alison held the Regius Chair, his principal interest related to its role in disseminating information about elevating, by means of government intervention through the introduction of appropriate public health measures, the standard of living of the poor.¹⁹ While this clearly diminished the risk of exposure to infectious disease in the poor communities, it also greatly diminished the risk of infection amongst the more well-off members of the population.

In 1842, Alison succeeded Dr James Home (1758–1842) as Professor of the Practice of Physic, and was forced to resign this post in 1855 due to increasing episodes of ill health brought on by his excessive exertions, although he continued to take an interest in scientific pursuits. He died in 1859, and was given a public funeral by the Magistrates, the University and the citizens of Edinburgh.⁶

Robert (later Sir Robert) Christison (1797–1882) Fig. 5²⁰ succeeded Alison, and held the Regius Chair from 1822 to 32. Christison was appointed to this Regius Chair when only 24 years of age, having graduated in 1815 with the MA degree, and the MD degree in 1819. The Chair had fallen vacant in April 1821. He had by then only very recently completed a course of analytical chemistry in Paris under the instruction of E.W. Robiquet. He had also

attended F. Magendie's lectures on poisons. While in Paris, he also heard, and was extremely impressed by, one lecture delivered by M.J.B. Orfila, the eminent toxicologist and Professor of Medical Jurisprudence at Paris. While he was still there, his friends submitted his name for the Regius Chair in Edinburgh, and their proposal was greatly assisted by the testimonial from Robiquet, the important French chemist. The latter drew attention to Christison's considerable expertise within the field of Chemistry. He stated that he was *en état d'entreprendre toute espèce de travail chimique*.²¹

His application was also strongly supported by Sir George Warrender, then a Junior Lord of the Admiralty, who it appears had an extremely high regard for Christison's expertise.²² Warrender had been a family friend, and had persuaded Lord Melville to appoint Christison to this Chair. Christison noted in his autobiography that he wished to withdraw from the contest for the Medical Jurisprudence Chair because he considered himself too young to be appointed to this post. However, he was informed by Sir George Warrender and Sir Andrew Halliday that "...the steps taken on my [i.e. his] behalf had gone too far, and held out too fair a prospect of success, for me [i.e. him] to beat a retreat now". More particularly, it was noted that efforts had been made by the Tory Government to abolish the Chair, "so little was then known in London of the importance of this branch of medicine, which indeed was not taught in any metropolitan medical school, or elsewhere else in the British dominions except at Edinburgh".²³

Shortly after his appointment to the Chair, he purchased all of the French medico-legal works then available, and prepared his lectures from these. He later became familiar with the German literature on this topic, and amended his lectures accordingly, and within a period of three years, he entirely redrafted his lecture notes. These amended notes discussed the important features of a series of British medico-legal cases, and also drew attention to the relevant legal issues involved. He also included in his lectures, observations on the responsibility of doctors when examining individuals whose life was to be insured, based on his own experience as medical adviser to the Standard and Life Assurance Company.

His lectures were initially attended principally by young law students, although medical students soon replaced them after his course was made an optional component of their medical curriculum in 1825. This was after Christison successfully petitioned the University to include medical jurisprudence as an optional subject for medical degrees. It was only in 1832, after Christison accepted the Chair of Materia Medica that the topics covered in the course of Medical Jurisprudence and Medical Police should be formally included as a *compulsory* component of the medical curriculum. Because of his interest in Medical Jurisprudence, Christison emphasised the teaching of this subject in his lectures, while minimising the teaching of Public Health, as had previously been emphasised by his predecessor in office.

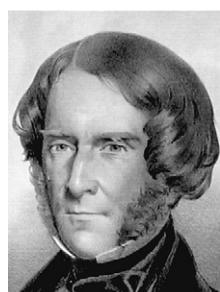


Fig. 5. Robert (later Sir Robert) Christison. Lithograph by F. Schenck, after a drawing by W. Stewart. With permission, Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

During this period, he was acknowledged as an excellent and unbiased medical and scientific witness, and this was particularly evident when he gave evidence in the trial of Burke and his common-law wife Helen McDougal.²⁴ What is particularly relevant is that all of his expert testimony in this trial was backed up by the results of his own experimental studies.²⁵ While Burke was condemned, and executed, “*his mistress got off with a verdict of ‘Not proven,’ on the ground that she was in loco conjugis, subject to Burke’s influence and commands, and because nothing else was proved against her than she knew what was doing, but fled into the lobby to escape seeing it.*”²⁶

In a later trial in which he gave expert testimony, in that of Palmer for the Rugely murders, his evidence convinced both the presiding Judge, Lord Campbell, and the jury that only one verdict was possible, and Palmer was duly hanged.²⁷ After his numerous impressive appearances in court, and particularly because of his ability to highlight defective crown medical testimony, the Solicitor-General appointed him a Crown medical witness. He remained in this capacity until 1866.

Christison was particularly interested in the field of Toxicology, and emphasised its critical importance in cases of poisoning. The publication of his *Treatise on Poisons* occurred in 1829,²⁸ and was the result of his numerous studies in this field, the first of which was with J.F. Coindet, and entitled *An experimental inquiry on poisoning by oxalic acid*.²⁹ Shortly after its publication, he was translated to the Chair of Materia Medica and Therapeutics (in 1832). In 1839, after he had relinquished his Regius Chair, he wrote, with James Syme and his successor Thomas Traill the detailed pamphlet entitled *The Medico-Legal Examination of Dead Bodies*,³⁰ and this very soon became the standard work on post-mortem examination in Scotland.

Christison was twice elected President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, in 1838–40 and 1846–48. He was also elected President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh from 1868 to 73, Physician-in-ordinary to the Queen in Scotland, and created a baronet in 1871.

While it is clear that the first three holders of the Regius Chair, Andrew Duncan junior, William Pulteney Alison and Robert (later Sir Robert) Christison had used it as a stepping stone to other Chairs, this was not the case as far as their successors were concerned.

Thomas Stewart Traill (1781–1862) Fig. 6,³¹ who held the Regius Chair from 1832 to 62, succeeded Christison. He was born in Kirkwall, and was extremely proud to be an Orcadian. He took the Edinburgh MA degree and in 1802 qualified with the MD degree. In 1804, he settled into general practice in Liverpool, and remained there for 27 years. During this period, he was a popular lecturer on Chemistry and first Secretary and founder of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. In 1829, he was appointed Physician to the Liverpool Infirmary, but left this post when he was appointed to the Regius Chair of Medical Jurisprudence in Edinburgh in 1832. While he had originally applied for the Edinburgh Chair of Materia



Fig. 6. Lithograph by F. Schenck of Thomas Stewart Traill. With permission, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

Medica, when he heard that Christison was the successful applicant, he immediately applied for the Chair that Christison had vacated. Henry Brougham, the Lord Chancellor, and a friend from his University days, and Francis Jeffrey, who was then Lord Advocate for Scotland, supported his application.

He was appointed to the Regius Chair at the age of 50, and held it until his death in 1862. While he was generally considered less distinguished than Christison, his *Outlines of a Course of Lectures on Medical Jurisprudence*, published in 1836,³² was a popular text, and went into a third edition in 1857. In 1839, he published with Christison and Syme their text entitled *The Medico-Legal Examination of Dead Bodies*,³⁰ at the request of the Lord Advocate. While he had acted on a number of occasions as a medical witness, his knowledge of toxicology was considerably less than that of Christison, and he was far less impressive than Christison in this role. In addition to providing his own course of lectures, he also lectured on Chemistry, Mineralogy and Meteorology as well as on Natural History for Professor Jameson. He published a substantial number of articles and papers when in Liverpool and during the period that he held the Regius Chair in Edinburgh.

One of his claims to fame was the fact that he was the editor of the 8th Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Although he contributed over 40 articles on a wide range of topics, due to his poor health he was unable to undertake much of the editing involved in this monumental exercise. He was elected FRS Edin in 1819, and FRCP Edin in 1833, being elected President of the latter institution from 1852 to 54.

Andrew Douglas (later Sir Douglas) Maclagan (1812–1900) Fig. 7³³ succeeded Traill, and held the Regius Chair from 1862–97. He was the eldest of the 7 sons of David Maclagan (1785–1865),³⁴ and graduated with the MD degree in 1833. One of his younger brothers became Archbishop of York.³⁵ He had earlier gained the Licentiate diploma (in 1831) and later the Fellowship diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (in 1833). He also gained the diploma of the Edinburgh College of Physicians in 1833, and had been elected to their Fellowship in 1864. He was a great friend of Christison (see above), and appeared as a witness for the Crown both before and after his appointment to the Regius Chair. He

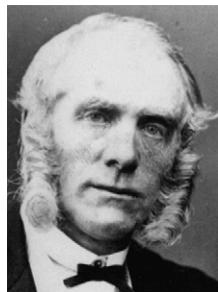


Fig. 7. Photograph of Andrew Douglas (later Sir Douglas) Maclagan. With permission, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

also appeared as a witness for the Crown on a number of occasions with Henry Littlejohn, for example in 1865 and 1878, before Littlejohn succeeded Maclagan in this Chair in 1897.

Douglas Maclagan was appointed to this Chair in 1862, and like Christison before him had a considerable interest in Chemistry and Toxicology, and taught these subjects in the Edinburgh extra-mural school from 1845. He also had considerable experience as a medical witness, having acted on a number of occasions as a medical witness for the Crown, being an authority on the analysis of poisons. He also taught *Materia Medica* in the extra-mural school for over 18 years.

After his appointment to this Chair he particularly emphasised the importance of public health matters in his lectures, and complemented this by introducing a BSc in Public Health in 1875, and a DSc in this subject in 1877. The introduction of these degrees was particularly timely, as they gave formal recognition and status to Scottish Medical Officers of Health. Such posts had been recognised in England and Wales following the introduction of the Public Health Act of 1875. These degrees attracted many medical practitioners who subsequently entered public health administration in England, although their role was only formally recognised in Scotland after the introduction of the Public Health Act, Scotland, in 1897.

He was particularly interested in Dermatology, and lectured almost exclusively on this subject during the last few years of his occupancy of the Regius Chair. This eventually led to the establishment of the Department of Skin Diseases in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. During his earlier clinical career, he was a member of both the surgical and medical staff of the Infirmary, eventually retiring from the clinical staff in 1885. He also published during his clinical career numerous contributions especially on toxicology and therapeutics as well as poetry particularly with a medical theme.³⁶

Like his father before him, he was elected President of both Edinburgh Royal Colleges, of Surgeons (in 1859–60) and Physicians (in 1884–7), and these were the only two individuals to date who have been elected to both of these posts. He was President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh from 1890 to 95, having been elected a Fellow in January



Fig. 8. Photograph of Henry (later Sir Henry) Duncan Littlejohn. With permission, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

1843, and was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1886.³⁷ He died in April 1900.

Henry (later Sir Henry) Duncan Littlejohn (1826/28–1914) Fig. 8³⁸ held the Regius Chair of Forensic Medicine from 1897 to 1906, when his only son, Henry Harvey Littlejohn, succeeded him. He graduated with the Edinburgh MD degree and also obtained the Licentiate diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in 1847, gaining their Fellowship diploma in 1854. After a year spent in Vienna, Berlin and Paris, he returned to Edinburgh on his appointment to the post of assistant pathologist to the Infirmary. He soon became a noted authority in both public health and legal medicine, and in 1854 was appointed to the part-time post of police surgeon to the Edinburgh Town Council.

By 1858, after he had appeared in numerous cases as a medical witness, he was then elevated to the position of a medical examiner for the Crown. He gave his first lectures on Forensic Medicine at the Edinburgh extra-mural school in 1856, and in 1873 was formally appointed Medical Adviser to the Board of Supervision for the Relief of the Poor.

Possibly more importantly, in 1862 he was appointed Edinburgh's first Medical Officer of Health, under the conditions of the General Police Act (Scotland) of the same year, spending the majority of his time in improving all aspects of Edinburgh's sanitary deficiencies. Within a few decades of his appointment as Edinburgh's first Medical Officer of Health, the improvements he introduced had a dramatic effect in more than halving the capital's death rate from severe epidemics and preventable diseases. His principal role during this period, and during the period that he held his Chair, was in the introduction of compulsory notification of infectious diseases under the 1897 Public Health (Scotland) Act. He was also instrumental in the construction of the new City (or Fever) Hospital in Edinburgh in 1903.

Between 1855 and 60, he became the first editor of the *Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Medical Science*,³⁹ and he published numerous cases of forensic interest in this journal, although he did not find sufficient time to prepare a textbook in which he could expand on his medico-legal and public health interests. His *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the City of Edinburgh*⁴⁰ drew attention to the sanitary deficiencies in the City of Edinburgh, and led to the

Edinburgh City Improvement Act of 1867. This paper is considered a classic of its type, and had a dramatic effect on improving the sanitary arrangements in the capital. In addition it also led to the disappearance of smallpox and typhus from Edinburgh, earlier than in any other large city in Britain.⁴¹

It is also relevant to note here that William Tennant Gairdner (1824–1907), another extra-mural lecturer in Edinburgh, published in 1862 an important paper on sanitation. This was entitled *Public Health in relation to Air and Water*,⁴² and in the following year he was appointed the first Medical Officer of Health for the city of Glasgow. This appointment and that in Edinburgh made during the previous year were the first of their type in Scotland.

Littlejohn's experience of medico-legal cases was considerable, and his extra-mural lectures on this topic, which were delivered over a period of 42 years (from 1855 to 97), were particularly popular with audiences often exceeding 250 students. These lectures were frequently complemented with "field demonstrations" to relevant locations. In 1875, he was elected President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

It was however, only at the age of 71,⁴³ in 1897, that he eventually succeeded Maclagan to the Regius Chair of Forensic Medicine and Public Health. When in 1898 the University established a Chair of Public Health, his appointment was exclusively to the Regius Chair of Forensic Medicine (see below). His numerous measures in relation to improving the public health of the citizens of Scotland were recognised by the award of a knighthood in 1895.

By the time Maclagan retired in 1897, it was generally felt that the time had come to separate Forensic Medicine from Public Health, as there was no longer any close connection between these two disciplines. It is also relevant to note here that the Chair of Public Health in Edinburgh was inspired by the activities of Louis Pasteur (1822–95).

Pasteur had visited Edinburgh in 1884, while attending the Tercentenary celebrations of the University, and was the guest of Henry J. Younger and, later, of Alexander Low Bruce, partners of the brewery firm William Younger & Co. In memory of this visit, A.L. Bruce founded the Chair of Public Health in the University. Additional donations were obtained from his widow (the daughter of Stanley Livingstone, the African explorer) as well as from Sir John Usher and others, and sufficient funds were raised to endow the Chair. It was established shortly after the resignation from his Regius Chair of Sir Douglas Maclagan. The first individual appointed to the Bruce and John Usher Chair of Public health, in 1898, was Charles Hunter Stewart, and this was the first Chair in this subject in Britain. Three years later, Sir John Usher provided the funds to establish and equip the Institute of Public Health, after the University had secured an appropriate site in Warrender Park Road.⁴⁴

There were also a considerable number of individuals who lectured on Medical Jurisprudence in the Edinburgh

extra-mural school during the 19th and first half of the 20th century. The dates that they first delivered these lectures were as follows: 1833, Dr Fletcher (previously taught Physiology in the extra-mural school in 1832); 1835, Alexander Miller; 1839, David Skae (he later lectured on Mental Diseases, and was subsequently Physician Superintendent of the asylum at Morningside); 1845, John (later Sir John) Rose Cormack and A.D. Campbell; 1850, Alexander Keiller; 1854, D.R. Haldane; 1856, Henry Duncan Littlejohn; 1880, H.A. Husband; 1898, Henry Harvey Littlejohn and W.G. Aitchison. Robertson. Douglas J.A. Kerr also lectured on Forensic Medicine between 1928 and 53.⁴⁵

Henry Harvey Littlejohn (1862–1927) Fig. 9⁴⁶ succeeded his father in the Regius Chair of Forensic Medicine, and held this post from 1906 until his death in 1927. He had formerly taught Forensic Medicine in the Edinburgh extra-mural school from 1898. Before his appointment to this post, he was extremely highly regarded in Edinburgh, and was said to have been unsurpassed as a lecturer. Like his father before him, he was acknowledged to be "one of our greatest experts in medical jurisprudence".⁴⁷

After taking the MA degree, he commenced his medical studies, and graduated MB ChB in 1886, with the intention of following in his father's footsteps. He therefore studied public health, taking the BSc in this subject, and graduating in 1888. After studying in Vienna, Berlin and Paris, like his father before him, he took the Licentiate diploma of the Edinburgh College of Surgeons in 1889, and their Fellowship diploma during the following year. After he graduated in medicine, he was elected Senior President of the Royal Medical Society in 1888–9 (during the Society's 152nd Session), in the same year that his father was elected an Honorary Member of the Society.⁴⁸

For a number of years before his appointment to the Regius Chair, he had acted not only as his father's assistant in his class of medical jurisprudence, but also assisted him in his duties as Medical Officer of Health for the city of Edinburgh. In 1891, he was appointed Medical Officer of Health to the city of Sheffield, only returning to Edinburgh in 1897 when he was appointed Lecturer in Medical Jurisprudence at Surgeons' Hall, and to the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women.

In 1906, he was appointed chief police surgeon in Edinburgh, and was a frequent expert witness for the Crown in



Fig. 9. Photograph of Henry Harvey Littlejohn. With permission, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh.

criminal cases. He soon gained a similar reputation to that achieved by his father, as an expert witness who was both reasonable and fair when cross-examined. His literary output was rather limited, although he published an impressive textbook entitled *Forensic Medicine*⁴⁹ in 1925. While he inherited a fine Forensic Museum from his father, he added numerous specimens to it. He also acted as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine for a number of years, taking the responsibilities of this office extremely seriously. From 1915, he was the University's representative on the General Medical Council, and served on a number of its committees. He did not marry.

Sydney (later Sir Sydney) Alfred Smith (1883–1969) Fig. 10⁵⁰ succeeded Harvey Littlejohn in the Regius Chair of Forensic Medicine, and held this post from 1928 to 53. He had initially qualified as a pharmacist then undertook part-time studies at the Faculty of Science at the Victoria College, Wellington, New Zealand, while remaining a dispensing chemist in Wellington Hospital. He then obtained a scholarship to study medicine in Edinburgh, graduating MB ChB with first class honours in 1912. In 1913, he obtained the Diploma in Public Health. After briefly working in general practice, on the advice of Professor Harvey Littlejohn he entered the University of Edinburgh's Department of Forensic Medicine as an assistant, and obtained a gold medal for his MD thesis in 1914. When he returned to New Zealand, he shortly afterwards became a Medical Officer of Health for Otago, at Dunedin.

He then transferred to Wellington where he continued his civilian activities and also undertook duties in various military camps. In 1917, he was appointed principal medico-legal expert to the Egyptian Government, associated with a Lectureship in Forensic Medicine at the School of Medicine in Cairo, where he remained for 11 years. During this period he made a considerable number of original contributions in forensic medicine, particularly in relation to ballistics and firearms. In 1928, he was appointed to the Regius Chair in Edinburgh. From 1931, he was also Dean of the Faculty of Medicine for 23 years. From 1954 to 7, he was elected Rector of the University of Edinburgh. He also acted as a medical expert for both the Crown and for the defence, and gained an international reputation in his field.

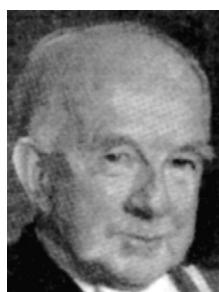


Fig. 10. Portrait of Sydney (later Sir Sydney) Alfred Smith by Sir William Hutchison. Presented to him on his retirement from Edinburgh University. This served as the frontispiece to his autobiography.

During the Second World War, he continued to investigate the properties of various types of official ammunition, while also acting as a consultant in medico-legal cases for the Army. He also played an important role in the establishment of the Polish School of Medicine in Edinburgh. In addition, from 1931 to 56 he served on the General Medical Council and after he retired from his University post, acted as a consultant in forensic medicine to the World Health Organisation. He was associated with many other organisations, elected FRS Edin in March 1929 and FRCP Edin in July 1933, and was knighted in 1949.

During his career, he wrote a number of textbooks, including his *Forensic Medicine*, first published in 1925,⁵¹ *Recent Advances in Forensic Medicine*, with John Glaister,⁵² as well as editing four editions of *Principles and Practice of Medical Jurisprudence*, by A.S. Taylor.⁵³ His autobiography, *Mostly Murder*, was published in 1959.⁵⁴ He also wrote a considerable number of articles one of which briefly discussed the early history of the Regius Chair.⁵⁵

During the inter-regnum between the termination of the appointment of Sir Sydney Smith in 1953 and the appointment of Professor Mason, Drs. Fiddes and Nagle taught this subject in the University of Edinburgh. Since 1953, the Regius Chair of Forensic Medicine has been occupied by two distinguished forensic pathologists, John Kenyon Mason (1919–), from 1973 to 85 and more recently by Anthony Busutil (1945–), from 1988 to 2006.

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